

## **Honoring Mr. Thomas Littrell of Plainville, KS**

December 10, 2008

*Speech submitted for the Congressional Record*

Madame Speaker, I rise today to recognize Thomas Littrell of Plainville, Kansas. This recognition is not just long overdue, it is 38 years overdue. Tom Littrell, like many Vietnam veterans, may not consider himself a hero. Today it is my privilege to share the story of an unsung hero, my friend and fellow Kansan, Tom Littrell.

When Tom was sent to serve in Vietnam as a young soldier, he left behind his family and friends in Plainville and headed to a combat zone in Southeast Asia. As a member of the second platoon of the 919th Combat Engineers attached to the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Tom joined a new family – one forged by shared service in an unfamiliar territory.

He began his tour of duty by courageously volunteering as a driver of an APC tank. His fellow platoon member, Doug Giesige, describes Tom's job as "the most vulnerable a man could routinely do in our unit. Our enemies would place their land mines on the side of the road that corresponded with the driver's side of the track. Our drivers would be located directly over such explosions and as such, they would suffer the most casualties and injuries of any of us on these tracks. It was hard to demand that a man do this every day, thus all were doing this as willing

volunteers. It takes a special breed of man to do this job. Knowing that he was as vulnerable as you can be, day in and day out. They all tended to be hard working and pretty hard nosed and reliable. Stubborn, actually.”

Tom also served as a demolitionist and mine sweeper. He and his fellow soldiers experienced ambush and encountered land mines regularly. During this time, Tom was involved in five incidents where his tank hit landmines. While some soldiers were sent to the rear and treated for their injuries following such incidents, Tom was not. As driver of the tank, he knew the importance of his role. He was treated in the field for his injuries and went back to work. His sense of duty to his fellow soldiers meant more to him than his own comfort. As Doug Giesege recalled, “On April 2, 1970 our platoon was involved with a 24-hour ordeal that cost us multiple injuries. The final action of the day involved our track hitting a mine and being the focus of an ambush just after dark. All of us were blown off the track except Tom and Lieutenant Livinggood. Sometime during the firefight, Tom went out after Staff Sergeant Russell under heavy fire and dragged him back to the track.”

Tom exemplified the best of those who serve our country – sacrifice, courage, and bravery. Tom would tell you he was just doing his job when he served in Vietnam, but to the men he served with, it was more than that.

Madame Speaker, please join me in recognizing Tom Littrell’s courageous service today. We also acknowledge the support of his wife of 36 years, Charlotte, and their children, Jason, Amanda and Renee. And although it is decades past its due, we offer a few simple words to Mr. Thomas Littrell of Plainville, Kansas. Thank you, my friend, thank you.